

G

GET A HANDLE ON (SOMETHING)

to find a way to deal with a problem or difficult situation

1. I'm trying to *get a handle on* my job search, so I'm updating my resume and asking my old teachers for letters of recommendation.
2. Margaret's babysitting job was difficult at first, but she *got a handle on* the children after she promised to read them a story.

GET (A) HOLD OF (ONESELF)

to get control of oneself; stop being emotional

1. Stop crying, Mary. *Get a hold of yourself* and calm down.
2. The man narrowly missed hitting another car on the highway. Afterward, he pulled off the road to try to *get hold of himself*.

Compare to: *get it/ (one's) act together; go to pieces*

The expression *get (a) hold of oneself* emphasizes emotional control whereas *get one's act together* emphasizes mental or physical control.

GET (A) HOLD OF (SOMEONE)

to contact someone or communicate with someone, usually by telephone

1. The real estate agent couldn't *get hold of* them before the house was sold to someone else. They never answered their phone.
2. The ambulance brought the little boy to the hospital, and the doctor *got a hold of* the boy's parents before he operated.

GET (A) HOLD OF (SOMETHING)

to acquire or obtain something

1. I was able to *get hold of* a copy of the magazine, but it was the last one.
2. Sarah was very lucky to *get a hold of* an extra ticket to the ballgame.

The expression is used to describe something that is somewhat difficult to acquire, perhaps because it is rare.

GET A LEG UP

to make a good start on some activity or project

1. It took a long time, but you've finally *got a leg up* on your college degree. It shouldn't take you much longer to finish.
2. I'm going to *get a leg up* on next year's budget by planning several months in advance.

This expression originally meant "to be lifted onto a horse," and can indicate getting ahead of other people.

GET A MOVE ON

to hurry

1. *Get a move on!* Everyone is waiting for you.
2. We asked the waiter to bring our check twenty minutes ago. I sure wish that he would *get a move on!*

Synonyms: *shake a leg!; step on it!*

This expression can be used as a verb or as a command to another person.

GET A WORD IN EDGEWISE

to insert a word or sentence into an otherwise one-sided conversation

1. Elizabeth talked on and on. No one else got a chance to tell her what he or she thought because they couldn't *get a word in edgewise*.
2. Jerry finally *got a word in edgewise* when Tony stopped talking to take a drink.

The word *edgewise* means to turn something to its narrowest dimension. The expression suggests that one must put one's words *edgewise* in order to squeeze them into a conversation where words are run together very tightly. The expression is usually used in the negative, *can't get a word in edgewise*, meaning that one is unable to get into the conversation because someone else is doing all the talking.

GET BY

to just barely manage, financially (sentence 1) or with one's work or responsibilities (sentence 2)

1. We're *getting by* now, but if we get an unexpected bill it would bankrupt us.
2. I'm *getting by* the best way I know how: by working hard.

Synonyms: *keep one's head above water; make ends meet*

GET CAUGHT/BE LEFT HOLDING THE BAG [LEAVE (SOMEONE) HOLDING THE BAG]

to make someone the scapegoat; to be blamed for something that was not one's fault or was only partly one's fault

1. The other team members left, Bill was *left holding the bag*, trying to explain a bad project.
2. Christine helped Tim invent a scheme to cheat people out of their money and it went wrong. She left town and Tim *got caught holding the bag*.

Compare to: *leave (someone) in the lurch*

Leave someone in the lurch is usually applied more generally to any number of situations involving responsibility whereas *leave someone holding the bag* is usually applied to a situation involving theft in which one person is literally left holding (or caught with) the stolen goods.

GET DOWN TO BRASS TACKS/BUSINESS/ THE NITTY GRITTY

to get serious or practical about something

1. I think we've fooled around with this plan long enough. It's time to *get down to brass tacks*.
2. The meeting should have started fifteen minutes ago. I have another appointment in an hour, and I wish we would *get down to business*.
3. Your ideas in this report are hard to understand. Why not take out all the useless information and *get down to the nitty gritty*?

Compare to: (sentence 1) *talk turkey*; (sentence 2) *get the show on the road*

To *get down to business* means to get serious and start. To *get down to the nitty gritty* means to get to the basic issue or problem.

GET IT IN THE NECK

to receive something unpleasant, such as criticism or punishment

1. I thought I was doing a fine job until I was fired because the boss didn't like my work. I sure *got it in the neck*.
2. Frank thought they were the best of friends. Then one day for no apparent reason, she stopped speaking to him. He really *got it in the neck*.

The *it* in the expression probably refers to a foot or fist. The expression suggests getting kicked or hit in the neck.

GET OFF (ONE'S) HIGH HORSE

to stop acting superior

1. Ted really acts like he thinks he's the boss around here. He'd better *get off his high horse* pretty soon or he'll have no friends.
2. Who do you think you are coming in here and ordering me around like this? *Get off your high horse!*

The expression originates from the custom of high-ranking officials traveling on horseback, while commoners walked. The physical height of being up on the horse is equated with being in a superior position.

GET OFF/GO SCOT-FREE

to escape the proper or expected punishment; to be acquitted of a crime

1. Everyone knew the man had committed the crime, but he was found not guilty on a technicality and never spent a day in jail. He *got off scot-free*.
2. The thief had been caught too many times, but this time he would not *go scot-free*. He would spend years in prison.

GET (ONE'S) ACT/IT TOGETHER

to get control of oneself mentally or physically; to get organized

1. Virginia had been lazy on the job for some time. Her boss told her she had better *get her act together* or she would be looking for another job soon.
2. I don't know where my mind is these days—I feel so disorganized. I can't seem to *get it together*.

Synonyms: *on the ball*; *get a hold of (oneself)*

On the ball is a more subtle way of expressing someone's lack of mental control than *get one's act together*. *Get one's act together* emphasizes mental or physical control, whereas *get a hold of oneself* emphasizes emotional control.

GET (ONE'S) SECOND WIND

to get a second burst of energy

1. The dancers had to stop for a few minutes to take a rest. When they *got their second wind*, they started to dance again.
2. The candidate took the weekend off from campaigning because he was mentally exhausted. He told reporters that he would be back on the campaign trail after he *got his second wind*.

The expression suggests that when a person gets out of breath (*wind*), he/she can get a second one in order to continue. It can be used literally (sentence 1) or figuratively (sentence 2).

GET (SOMEONE'S) DANDER/HACKLES UP

to irritate or anger moderately

1. I don't like that man. Perhaps it's the way he talks to me or the way he acts around us—he sure *gets my dander up*.
2. Our neighbors are extremely messy and loud. They *get my hackles up*.

Synonyms: *rub (someone) the wrong way*; *set (someone's) teeth on edge*; *get (someone's) goat*; *bug*

Whereas *bug* means to annoy harmlessly or perhaps humorously, *get one's dander up* means to irritate in earnest.

GET (SOMEONE'S) GOAT

to irritate or annoy someone

1. I can't believe the boss is giving Judith the day before Christmas off, when he refused to let me take the day off. That really *gets my goat!*
2. The one thing that really *gets my husband's goat* is when he finds a parking place and someone else comes along and steals it.

Compare to: *get (one's) dander up*; *bug*

GET (SOMETHING) OFF (ONE'S) CHEST

to disclose or talk about something that is bothering or worrying one

1. I've had something on my mind all day that I just have to tell you. I will feel better when I *get it off my chest*.
2. You look very troubled about something. Why don't you talk about it and *get it off your chest*?

The idiom suggests that a bothersome concern weighs down one's chest or heart and that talking about it relieves the weight.

GET/HIT (SOMETHING) ON THE NOSE

to do or understand something perfectly

1. That's the right answer! You really *got it on the nose*.
2. Joannie's argument made perfect sense to me—she really *hit it on the nose*.

GET (SOMETHING) THROUGH (ONE'S) HEAD

to understand something that is difficult, especially because it is a shock, unwanted, or unexpected

1. How many times do I have to tell you, I'm not going back to college? When will you *get it through your head* that I want to go to work instead?
2. Tom couldn't seem to *get it through his head* that his company was letting him go after so many years of faithful service.

Compare to: *get the message*

The expression is usually used in a negative sense to describe how difficult it is to understand or accept something.

GET/GIVE THE GO-AHEAD

to receive or grant permission to proceed

1. The planning stage of the project was complete and we *got the go-ahead* to start construction.
2. The staff *got the go-ahead* from their boss to organize a birthday party for their colleague.

Synonym: *get/give (someone) the green light*

GET THE MESSAGE

to understand something that is only hinted at, perhaps because it is unpleasant

1. You can stop hinting that you don't want my company. I *get the message*, and I won't bother you again.
2. Jacqueline never answered the many letters the young man sent to her. She wondered when he would *get the message* that she wasn't interested in hearing from him.

Compare to: *get (something) through (one's) head*

GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD

to get started

1. We've been waiting for hours, and I'm ready to get started. Let's *get the show on the road*.
2. I can't wait any longer. If we don't *get the show on the road*, I'm going to have to schedule this meeting for another day.

Compare to: *get down to business*

GET TO THE BOTTOM OF (SOMETHING)

to understand something completely by sorting through all the facts or information

1. The detective had all the facts, but he couldn't piece them together yet. He wasn't certain what had happened, but he knew he would eventually *get to the bottom of it*.
2. Mark's parents could tell he was getting into some kind of trouble. They confronted him and said they wanted to *get to the bottom of the situation*.

The expression suggests the idea of a container (a situation) full of information or facts. Only the few facts on top are clear and they may not make much sense. When one finally *gets to the bottom* of the container (the situation), one will have gone through all the information and have a thorough understanding of how all the facts fit together.

GET TO THE POINT

to speak or write concisely and directly

1. That fellow never wastes your time talking about unimportant things. He immediately *gets to the point*.
2. People seem to *get to the point* much more quickly when they write e-mail compared to a traditional letter.

Antonyms: *beat around the bush; hem and haw*

GET-UP-AND-GO

physical energy

1. I've been so tired lately. I don't have any energy. I've lost my *get-up-and-go*.
2. This breakfast cereal claims that it gives you enough *get-up-and-go* to last you until lunchtime.
3. Contrary to popular belief, moderate exercise stimulates a person to have more *get-up-and-go*. It doesn't fatigue the body.

GET UP ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE BED

to be in a bad mood from the beginning of the day

1. Don't be upset that Peggy got angry with you; she'll cool off soon. She always has a short temper when she *gets up on the wrong side of the bed*.
2. I'm sorry I yelled at you. I must have *gotten up on the wrong side of the bed*.

Originally this phrase was "got up left foot forward" and dates back to the ancient Romans. In their time, the left side of anything was seen as sinister or unlucky, and Romans believed it was bad luck to put the left foot down first when getting out of bed. The idea that left is bad continued for centuries and eventually the word *left* was replaced with *wrong*.

GET/GIVE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING) SHORT SHRIFT

to make quick work of something or to give little time to someone

1. The secretary preferred working with people directly. She was an excellent secretary but she *gave short shrift* to typing up notes and preparing reports.
2. I haven't much time for incompetent fools like Sam. I *gave him short shrift* when he came in here asking for a pay raise.

The expression conveys a negative feeling about someone or something. They are thought of as unworthy of much time or consideration.

GET/GIVE (SOMEONE) THE COLD SHOULDER

to ignore someone intentionally

1. Margie and Steve used to be close friends, but now every time they meet, she *gives him the cold shoulder*.
2. When we bought our new house, we thought everyone would welcome us to the neighborhood. But people *give us the cold shoulder* when we try to be friendly and neighborly.

Synonym: *turn up (one's) nose at (someone/something)*

Whereas *give someone the cold shoulder* is used only with people, *turn up one's nose* can be applied to both people and things.

GET/GIVE (SOMEONE) THE GO-AHEAD

to get or give permission to proceed

1. The kids asked their mother for permission to set up a lemonade stand. Her lemon tree was full of lemons, so she *gave them the go-ahead*.
2. Playing baseball in the middle of the work day sounds like a great idea, but you should probably *get the go-ahead* from our boss before we start.

Synonym: *get/give (someone) the green light*

GET/GIVE (SOMEONE) THE GREEN LIGHT

to get or give permission to proceed

1. The planning stage of the project was complete and we *got the green light* to start construction.
2. The boss *gave them the green light* to order all the equipment they needed.

Synonym: *give/get (someone) the go-ahead*

This expression comes from the green light on a stop light, which indicates that cars can move forward.

GET/GIVE (SOMEONE) THE SACK

to be fired from one's job

1. John lost his job yesterday. He *got the sack*.
2. Marie has two small children to support. You can't just *give her the sack*. What is she going to do for money?
3. I *was sacked* from my last job for showing up late every day.

Compare to: *pink slip*

GET/GIVE (SOMEONE) THE SHORT END OF THE STICK

to get (give someone) the unfair or less advantageous part of a deal or arrangement

1. Martha agreed to babysit the children while Henry went shopping. Martha had much more work to do than Henry did. She *got the short end of the stick*.
2. Look out for your interests and speak up if you think you're getting an unfair deal. Don't let them *give you the short end of the stick*.

GET/GIVE (SOMEONE) THE THIRD DEGREE

to be questioned in great detail

1. My parents didn't believe that I'd spent the evening at the library. They *gave me the third degree*, questioning me about when I had arrived and left and what I'd done while I was there.
2. When it was revealed that the candidate had been arrested some years before, he *got the third degree* from the newspaper reporters. He had to answer question after question.

GET/HAVE (SOMETHING) DOWN PAT

to do something repeatedly until one knows how to do it without a mistake; to perfect an activity

1. Lynn worked on her dance routine until she could practically do it in her sleep. She *had it down pat*.
2. Practice saying your speech again and again. I want to be sure you *get it down pat*.

GET/LEND (SOMEONE) A HAND

to help someone

1. I need some help lifting these boxes. Who can *give me a hand*?
2. They *gave him a hand* with his rent and utility bills while he was unemployed.

The expression suggests that by giving someone a hand, one helps that person do more work than he could do with his own two hands. The expression is usually used in the sense of helping someone physically (sentence 1) but it can also be used in a financial sense (sentence 2).

GIFT OF GAB, THE

the ability to speak easily and well

1. We always enjoy listening to Uncle Charlie's stories. He really knows how to tell good ones—he's got *the gift of gab*.
2. I'm not much of a talker. I wasn't blessed with *the gift of gab*.

Compare to: *talk a blue streak*

The expression is used humorously or with admiration. It suggests that being able to speak (*gab*) is a welcome trait (*gift*). The word *gab* is probably an Old English variation of the Scottish word 'gob,' which means 'mouth' or 'beak.'

GIVE IN

to surrender

1. The workers refused to *give in* and accept the unfair contract, so the strike continued.
2. The parents tried to resist their children's pleas for sweets, but the kids were so cute that the parents were forced to *give in*.

Similar to: *cry uncle; knuckle under*

GIVE (ONE'S) RIGHT (BODY PART) FOR/TO DO (SOMETHING)

to want something very much

1. I want that car so badly. I'd *give my right arm* for that car.
2. Veronica wants so badly to spend her vacation on the beach, she said she'd *give her right leg* to go to Hawaii.

The expression suggests that one wants something so much that one is willing to give an essential part of one's body for it.

GIVE (SOMEONE) A HARD TIME

to be difficult with someone; to give someone unnecessary difficulty

1. Patricia had not done a good job on the report, and she thought her boss would just ask her to redo it. Instead, *gave her a hard time* and wouldn't stop talking about it. He *gave her a hard time* about the report.

2. The students *gave the new teacher a hard time* on his first day. They dropped their books, passed notes while he was talking, and were generally uncooperative.

GIVE (SOMEONE) A PIECE OF (ONE'S) MIND

to confront someone who has behaved badly

1. Joan was upset with Bill and she told him just what she thought of him. She really *gave him a piece of her mind*.
2. I can't believe that they let their dog loose in my garden. I'm going over there right now to tell them that if I find that dog in my yard again, I'll call the police. I'm going to *give them a piece of my mind*!

Synonyms: *read (someone) the riot act; chew (someone) out; rake (someone) over the coals; speak (one's) piece*

GIVE (SOMEONE) A RING

to call someone on the telephone

1. When Sally arrived, she found a telephone in the airport and *gave her mother a ring*.
2. I'll be home by the phone all morning. *Give me a ring* when you get a chance.

Refers to the ringing of a telephone when it receives a call.

GIVE (SOMEONE) A SNOW JOB

to give someone a description of something or someone that is unrealistically attractive and positive

1. The English teacher was trying to find students to help with the publication of the school newspaper. She *gave us a snow job* about how much fun it would be and how little work it was—in fact, it was very hard work.
2. Richard tried to get Marsha to go out with his friend Don. Richard told Marsha that Don was good-looking, had a great personality and was rich. Richard *gave Marsha a snow job*, because Don turned out to be none of those things.

Synonyms: *sales pitch; con job; song and dance; pull the wool over (someone's) eyes*

GIVE (SOMEONE) A/SOME SONG AND DANCE

to give someone an overly dramatic or unbelievable excuse

1. Don't *give me a song and dance* about how difficult it was for you to get this work done on time—I know you've been goofing off.
2. We went to collect the rent from Paul, but he *gave us some song and dance* about not having the money right now.

Synonyms: *pull the wool over (someone's) eyes; cock and bull story; snow job*

GIVE (SOMEONE) A TASTE OF (HIS/HER) OWN MEDICINE

to treat someone the same way they treat others (especially when they are strict, unfair, or unkind)

1. She has treated everyone very unfairly. I wish that someone would *give her a taste of her own medicine*.
2. He always criticizes his colleagues for making careless mistakes. So after he accidentally started a fire in the office, they were really able to *give him a taste of his own medicine*.

Similar to: *fix (someone's) wagon; tit for tat*

GIVE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING) A WIDE BERTH

to allow a lot of space between oneself and someone or something else when passing

1. The children never walked on the south side of the road because they would have had to walk right past a frightening guard dog. They *gave that dog a wide berth*.
2. They couldn't tell if the driver was ready to back the truck up or whether he even saw them in his rear-view mirror. Just to be safe, they *gave the truck a wide berth* when they crossed the street behind it.

The expression probably originates from the 18th-century meaning of *berth*: sufficient sea-room for one ship to pass another.

GIVE (SOMEONE) THE COLD SHOULDER

to be unfriendly to somebody

1. Audrey tried to make up with Josh after their fight, but Josh didn't respond. He *gave her the cold shoulder*.
2. Beatrice was forced to find a new photography club when the members of her old club *gave her the cold shoulder*. They wouldn't talk to her at all.

GIVE (SOMEONE) THE SHIRT OFF (ONE'S) BACK

to give (figuratively) someone all one's possessions; to be very generous

1. The young woman's parents had denied themselves luxuries and vacations to provide for her. They had *given her the shirts off their backs* to give her a good life.
2. I know I can always depend on my friend Henry. I can call him whenever I need help. He would *give me the shirt off his back*.

The expression suggests that one would give someone all one's money and possessions down even to the shirt one is wearing.

GO AGAINST THE GRAIN

to be contrary to someone's nature

1. I'll get you out of trouble this one time, but don't ask me to do it again. It *goes against the grain* for me to help you when you should take responsibility for your own actions.
2. Terry noticed that the cashier in the store had given him too much change, and he went back immediately to return it. It would have *gone against the grain* for Terry to keep the money.

The expression originates from the idea that sawing wood against the grain (the natural direction of wood growth) is difficult.

GO AROUND IN CIRCLES

to be confused or lost; to make no progress

1. The directions to Arthur's house were so muddled and confused, he had us lost and *going around in circles*.
2. The instructions for how to put the toy together were not explained clearly at all. Mary *went around in circles* trying to figure them out.

GO BANANAS [DRIVE (SOMEONE) BANANAS]

to go crazy; to no longer be able to cope with a situation. To *drive someone bananas* means to annoy or irritate someone.

1. I'll *go bananas* if I have to sit for a whole evening and listen to that man talk on and on about his coin collection. It's boring to everyone but him.
2. The woman told her husband that the children were *driving her bananas*. He would have to look after them for the evening while she went out to a movie with some friends.

Synonyms: *at the end of (one's) rope; at (one's) wits' end*

GO BROKE

to run out of money completely; to become penniless

1. You can *go broke* buying Christmas presents for your children with today's high prices!
2. The drugstore on the corner is going out of business next week. The owner *went broke*.

Compare to: *flat broke*

GO FOR BROKE

to risk everything

1. The gambler was down to his last hundred dollars. He decided to *go for broke*, and he put the last of his money on one hand of cards.
2. Jan *went for broke* and invested all her money in the playwright's new play. If it was a success, she would be rich. If it was a flop, she would be penniless.

GO HAYWIRE

to malfunction; to break down

1. The robot worked fine until it tried to maneuver around the corner and *went haywire*. Its arms started to spin around, its head fell off, and it started shooting sparks out of its control panel.
2. When the man heard that his doctor's appointment was cancelled, he *went haywire*. He shouted that he would never go to the doctor again, and left.

Similar to: *at the end of (one's) rope; go bananas; at (one's) wits' end; go to pieces.*

Go haywire is generally applied to machines, whereas *go bananas* is more humorous and is restricted to people.

GO IT ALONE

to travel some path or do some activity by oneself, often something dangerous or risky

1. I tried to *go it alone* on completing the project, but I just couldn't do it. I had to get someone to help me.
2. The mountain climber said his route up the mountain is too dangerous for anyone but the most experienced person, so he won't take anyone with him. He is *going it alone*.

GO OFF HALF-COCKED

to do or say something in haste or without adequate planning or preparation

1. I know your daughter is late, but before you *go off half-cocked*, give her a chance to tell you her side of the story.
2. Dick thought up a scheme to get rich quick, but he didn't put much planning into it. He *went off half-cocked*, got into financial trouble, and made a fool of himself.

The expression probably originates from the idea of a gun misfiring when it is only half-cocked (as opposed to fully cocked), and therefore not fully ready to be fired.

GO OFF THE DEEP END

to become deeply involved with someone or something before one is ready; to go crazy

1. Peter *went off the deep end* when he met Marilyn. After just two months, they are already engaged to be married.
2. Sometimes it's easy to get overly excited about something new and different and *go off the deep end*.

The expression suggests the idea of plunging into the deep end of a swimming pool and being in over one's head.

GO OUT ON A LIMB

to take a risk

1. You have embarrassed and disappointed me several times before. Don't ask me to *go out on a limb* for you again.
2. They *went out on a limb* and lent him the money he asked for even though he was a poor risk. They could have lost all their money.

Synonym: *stick (one's) neck out*

The expression suggests that going out on a tree branch that might break is risky. The expression, however, is not used to describe physical risk.

GO OVER WITH A BANG

to be extremely successful

1. The author's latest book was more popular than he expected. In fact, it *went over with a bang*.
2. The fast-food restaurant's new chicken sandwich *went over with a bang*. Everyone was asking for it.

Antonym: *go over like a lead balloon*

GO OVERBOARD

to go to excess; to do too much

1. You have to be careful when decorating cakes. It's easy to *go overboard* and put on too much icing, too many decorations and too many colors.
2. Don't *go overboard* on these new, modern styles. If you spend all your clothing allowance on them, you may be sorry when the fashion changes.

GO OVER LIKE A LEAD BALLOON

to be completely unsuccessful, contrary to expectations; to fail

1. The car company introduced a new model that was supposed to be amazing, but it *went over like a lead balloon*. Nobody wanted to buy it.
2. That actor has been in several great movies, but his latest film will probably *go over like a lead balloon*. It's just terrible!

GO TO PIECES

to fall apart physically or emotionally; to lose one's self-control

1. Roger thought he was no longer in love with Amanda, but when he saw her again he *went to pieces*. He sat down and cried.
2. I think you're going to need some new shoes soon. Those shoes you are wearing now are *going to pieces*.

The expression often describes uncontrollable crying.

GO TO POT/SEED

to fall into disrepair; to deteriorate from lack of attention

1. The house has really fallen into disrepair. It's too bad they let it *go to seed* like that.
2. George really neglects his appearance nowadays. He has let himself *go to pot*.

Synonym: *go to the dogs*

Go to seed originates in the idea that the fruit on plants 'goes to seed' if it is not picked when ripe.

GO TO THE DOGS

to fall into disrepair; to deteriorate

1. This restaurant used to be so fashionable and classy, but it has *gone to the dogs* since it changed management.
2. This neighborhood is *going to the dogs*—the homeowners aren't keeping their houses or their yards in good repair. It's a shame.

Synonyms: *go to pot/seed*

GO TO TOWN

to do something with maximum enthusiasm; to splurge

1. When they bought an old house, they added a new bathroom, a modern kitchen, a sun porch and two new bedrooms. They really *went to town* fixing up their house.
2. Since Alice was paying for her own wedding, she decided to spare no expense. She really wanted to *go to town* on her wedding arrangements.

Synonyms: *pull out all the stops; go whole hog; whole nine yards*

Go to town connotes more elegance than *go whole hog* or (*go the*) *whole nine yards*.

GO UP IN SMOKE

to disappear; to be ruined

1. Judy had planned carefully and put in a lot of time building her career. Then she made one foolish mistake, and saw all her hard work *go up in smoke*.
2. The family managed to escape from the burning house. As they stood outside in the cold, they watched their house *go up in smoke*.
3. Larry expected to finish college and start a small company of his own, but all his plans *went up in smoke* when he lost his scholarship.

The expression suggests the idea of being burned. It is usually used figuratively to describe work (sentence 1) or plans (sentence 3) but it can be used literally (sentence 2).

GO WHOLE HOG

to spare nothing; to do something with maximum enthusiasm

1. The company *went whole hog* on the luncheon. They included both soup and salad on the menu, a choice of three main dishes and several desserts, and they paid for all the drinks, too.
2. When it comes to outfitting my car, I believe in *going whole hog*. I always get cruise control, extra padded seats, stereo, all the little luxuries.

Synonyms: *pull out all the stops; go to town; whole nine yards*

The expression does not convey the same sense of elegance as *go to town* does.

GO WITH THE FLOW

to take a relaxed attitude towards life

1. Life has its ups and downs. You shouldn't spend your time worrying. Just *go with the flow*.
2. I wish I could learn to *go with the flow* more. Whenever I have a problem at school, I get all stressed out.

Similar to: *like water off a duck's back; roll with the punches; take (something) in stride*

GOLDEN AGE

a time when something is at its best

1. The 1930s were the *golden age* of radio, when everyone gathered around in the evenings to listen. After television took over, radio became secondary.
2. The *golden age* of American literature began at the turn of the 20th century.

The expression is usually used to refer to the past.

GOOD EGG

a person who is basically good or sound, but who may be slightly peculiar or idiosyncratic

1. Sometimes Tim seems a little strange, but he really is a *good egg*.
2. George knew that Stuart was too cautious to drink very much, so George asked him to be a *good egg* and drive him home.

GOOD GRIEF!

an expletive that means "This is ridiculous!" or "I've had enough!"

1. *Good grief!* All you do is complain.
2. The children were jumping around, chasing after each other, and running around their mother until she couldn't stand it anymore. She lost her temper and yelled, "*Good grief!* I wish you would behave yourselves!"

Synonyms: *for crying out loud!; for goodness' sake!; for heaven's sake!*

This expression carries no literal meaning of its own, but it expresses a strong degree of exasperation.

GOOD SAMARITAN

a person who helps someone in trouble without thought of personal gain

1. Be a *good Samaritan* and volunteer some of your free time to help out at the hospital.
2. Sometimes you have to resist the urge to be a *good Samaritan* and think about your own safety. You can't pick up a strange hitchhiker in your car.

The expression has its origins in a story from the New Testament in which a man from Samaria helped someone who had been robbed by thieves.

GRASP AT STRAWS

to act in desperation with little hope of success

1. Henry tried everything he could think of to change Martha's mind, even tried things that he knew wouldn't work. He knew he was *grasping at straws*.
2. The thief told the judge one excuse after another. It was obvious that he was desperate and *grasping at straws*.

The expression suggests that whereas grasping a rope might succeed in saving one's life, *grasping at straws* (grass) is a desperate and probably useless attempt to hold on.

GRAVY TRAIN

an effortless time or job; a life of luxury

1. Scott got himself a job where he won't have to work very hard. He's really riding the *gravy train*.
2. They made some very wise and profitable investments, and now they can retire and live off the interest. They're on the *gravy train*.

GRAY MATTER

brain tissue and, by extension, intelligence

1. Anyone can see that his idea won't work. Doesn't he have any *gray matter* upstairs?
2. When it comes to *gray matter*, David got more than his fair share. He is clearly the smartest student in the class.

The expression refers to brain tissue, and suggests that one's intelligence is in direct proportion to size of one's brain.

GREEN AROUND THE GILLS

sick to one's stomach; nauseated

1. The sight of blood always makes me *green around the gills*. I always get sick to my stomach.
2. How can you eat uncooked meat? Doesn't that make you *green around the gills*?

GREEN THUMB

natural ability to grow plants

1. Amy really has a *green thumb*. Everything she plants in her garden grows so well.
2. You must have quite a *green thumb*. Your flowers are always so beautiful and healthy-looking.

The expression suggests that success with growing plants is a result of having a thumb that is the color of healthy plants.

GRIM REAPER

death

1. We'll all die in the end. You can't cheat *the grim reaper*.
2. Their grandmother was a very superstitious person and relied heavily on her intuition. She was convinced that she was about to die because she felt the *grim reaper* breathing down her neck.

The expression originates from the literary depiction of death as a hooded grim figure carrying a scythe (a farm tool with a long, curved blade attached at an angle to a long handle). He uses the scythe to 'reap' people.

GRIN AND BEAR IT

to accept or endure a bad situation

1. Steve doesn't particularly like his job, but he's going to have to *grin and bear it* until he can find a new one.
2. I've had more than I can take from that idiot. I'm not going to *grin and bear it* for one more minute.

Compare to: *bite the bullet*

Grin and bear it literally means to smile and endure something.